

# Ye Must Be Born Again

by George C. Clark, Sr. and John D. Clark, Sr.



*“Do not marvel that I said to you, Ye must be born again.”*

John 3:7

“*Ye must be born again.*” Listen to those words of our Lord Jesus. “*Ye must be born again.*” Tell it to sinful men as they struggle in their bondage and try to rise to better things. Proclaim the message to those who are proud of their achievements and who trust in their own strength. “*Ye must be born again!*”

Nicodemus, one of Israel’s elders, was greatly puzzled by our Lord’s words. When Jesus set before him the necessity of being born again, Nicodemus asked, “How can these things be?” This is a question many have asked, but there is a mystery concerning the New Birth which finite minds cannot solve. There are some things that men obtain only by the obedience of faith.

Jesus acknowledged the mystery of the New Birth when he described it to Nicodemus: “*The wind blows wherever it will, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it is coming from, nor where it is going. It is this way with every person born of the Spirit.*” (Jn. 3:8).

“*The sound of the wind*” is the voice of the Spirit. When Jesus said that the sound of the wind accompanies every new birth, he was explaining a spiritual truth. In reminding Nicodemus that winds produce sounds, Jesus was saying that “*every one who is born of the Spirit*” is moved by the Spirit to speak (in tongues) when it happens.

## WHEN WERE THE DISCIPLES BORN AGAIN?

Reader, do you know when Jesus’ disciples received an experience such as Jesus described to Nicodemus? At no time during Jesus’ earthly ministry did his disciples receive such an experience. Then, when did they receive it? Keep his words “*the wind blows wherever it will*” in mind as you read from Acts 2:2-4: “*And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*” This experience, which the disciples received on Pentecost morning, fulfills the description of the New Birth that Jesus gave to Nicodemus. Clearly, the disciples were born again in the second chapter of Acts.

In this covenant, especially, we live by the Word of God, not by the word of man. Man’s own “sound”, that is, his own confession of faith, bears no weight in heaven because men can be wrong. Only the witness of the Spirit is always true. As the apostle John pointed out, “*It is the Spirit that bears witness because the Spirit is truth*” (1Jn. 5:6b). Paul expressed the same truth in these words: “*The Spirit itself bears witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God*” (Rom. 8:16). Please notice that both these apostles emphasize the necessity of the Spirit’s testimony (speaking in tongues) as the divinely appointed sign that we have received the Spirit of God. It is God’s peculiar way of declaring one to be His child. It is the voice of “*Him who speaks from heaven*”, a voice we must not refuse (Heb. 12:25). It is the sound of the ever-moving wind of God.

No man knows another’s heart; therefore, the testimony of God’s Spirit is the only reliable testimony of true conversion. When the first Gentiles were born again, Peter described it to his fellow apostles: “*Men and brothers . . . God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the holy Ghost, even as He did unto us*” (Acts 15:7-8). And what witness did God give so that Peter and his companions would know that those Gentiles were born again? We are told, “*They heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.*”

Speaking in tongues when we receive the holy Ghost makes it possible for unbelievers to know who has received God’s Spirit. Because many people claim to be of God, those who are seeking God can become confused; therefore, “*tongues are for a sign,*” Paul affirmed, “*to them that believe not*” (1Cor. 14:22). How the love of God is revealed in this! He has given a sign for those outside His kingdom who want to be born again!

At the last supper, Jesus described the spiritual condition of those who followed him but had not yet received the Spirit: “*When a woman gives birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come. But when the child is born, she no longer remembers the suffering because a man is born into the world. Therefore, you also now have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one takes from you.*” (Jn. 16:21-22). By comparing his disciples’ spiritual condition with a woman in the pangs of childbirth, Jesus was telling them that the hour of their spiritual birth was near. The disciples had been conceived by the Word of God that Jesus had sown into their hearts, and now they were nearing the hour of their spiritual birth. They were no longer of the world (Jn. 17:14); at the same time, they were not “in Christ” (Jn. 17:21). They were “clean” under the Law (Jn. 15:3), but they were not yet sanctified (Jn. 17:17,19). As much as their lives had been made better by following Jesus, their greatest transformation, the New Birth, was yet to come.

## CONCEPTION IS NOT BIRTH

Nature itself teaches us that no birth can occur without a seed first being sown. This is true whether one is speaking naturally or spiritually. Nowhere is there a birth without the sowing of a seed. Spiritually, *“the seed is the Word of God”* (Lk. 8:11). One must receive this Seed in order for the process of New Birth to begin. Nature also teaches us that relatively few of the seeds sown actually produce life, and that even fewer mature and bear fruit. According to Jesus, only a small portion of the seeds of the kingdom of God that are sown into human hearts actually sprout, or produce righteousness in the life. Sometimes, he said, when one hears the Word (Seed), *“the wicked one catches away that which was sown in his heart”* (Mt. 13:19). The Word of God was sown into the hearts of many thousands during Jesus’ earthly ministry, yet only about one hundred twenty followers continued in his Word and were born again at the first outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Many mistake the receiving of the Seed to be the New Birth. They think that receiving the Word of God and being convicted of sin is the same as being born again. But cessation from evil, good as that is, is not the New Birth. Repentance does not wash away sins; sins are washed away only when the holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ (1Cor. 12:13; Acts 22:16).

The Samaritans, for one example, gladly received the Word that Philip preached (Acts 8:5-8); still, the washing away of their sins was not accomplished until later, after news of Philip’s preaching reached Jerusalem: *“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Ghost. (For as yet it had fallen upon none of them . . .) Then, laid they their hands on them, and they received the holy Ghost”* (Acts 8:14-17). As the Samaritans’ experience demonstrates, being convicted of sin and turning from it is only the first step toward the New Birth. One must receive the baptism of the Spirit, and when he

does, God will give the sign!

Tragically, many fail to continue in the Word after being convicted by it. Consequently, they never receive the baptism of the holy Ghost; they are never born again. Such people, and there are millions of them in Christianity around the world, must be warned that incomplete surrender is no better than none at all. God gives His Spirit only to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32); therefore, our first priority must be to know God’s will and to do it, not only to receive the baptism of Christ, but to obtain the promised salvation at the end of the way. *“Let no man deceive you by any means”*, my friend; no one will be saved without receiving the holy Ghost and then obeying it (1Pet. 3:21; Mk. 16:16; Rom. 8:14). Regardless of one’s reputation among men, he has no part in the kingdom of God without the holy Spirit. Paul said, *“If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”* (Rom. 8:9).

## WHO HAS REPENTED?

When a truly hungry soul hears the Word of God, a wonderful change begins to take place, a change wrought by the love and power of God. As one begins to feel the life of the Spirit, his countenance and behavior is altered. And if he continues in the Word, not allowing the wicked one to steal the Seed from his heart, the day will certainly come when the Lord will baptize him with the holy Spirit. He will come out of the womb to be numbered among the saints! Jesus encouraged us not to doubt this when he said, *“Every one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness shall be filled!”* The only way we can know that someone has repented is if he receives the baptism of the holy Ghost from Jesus.

Jesus said, *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Lk. 13:3). No one who believes the true gospel denies this. Whoever refuses to repent will surely perish. On the other hand, *“Peter said unto them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the holy Ghost’ ”* (Acts 2:38). No one who believes the true gospel denies this, either. Everyone who truly repents receives the Spirit. Despite these two

irrefutable truths, multitudes claim that they have repented (and have been baptized in the name of Jesus), but they have not received the baptism of the holy Spirit. How is that possible? If one can repent, yet not receive the Spirit (contrary to the Word by Peter), then one can refuse to repent, yet be saved in the end (contrary to the Word by Jesus). If God’s Word in Luke 13:3 to all who do not repent stands sure, then God’s Word in Acts 2:38 to all who do repent stands sure. Every one who repents will receive the holy Ghost; that is God’s promise. Every one who does not repent will not receive the holy Ghost and will perish. That is the simple truth, my friend; and the truth is destined to prevail over all the doctrines of man, regardless of how many may give to those doctrines a hearty “Amen.”

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## ***Someone to Lean On***

by Joseph H. Murray

Ignorance cannot bear to be ignored,  
But wisdom stands through trials on its own.  
The scorners have to lean on one another,  
The wise are taught by God to stand alone.

Jesus is the Rock of our salvation;  
Our hope is One, and certain is his throne.  
And with the strength we find in this foundation,  
The winds which blow against us vainly moan.

Abandon every prop and vain ambition,  
Communion thus with Jesus to begin.  
How sweet the joy and blessed consolation,  
To drink the cup of liberty from sin!

A taste of glory sent in peace from heaven  
Will fill the soul who stands alone with Him.  
How sweet the life dependent on the Master,  
And sweeter yet the judgment by a Friend.

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